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ABSTRACT

New Hampshire high school students and Dartmouth College students who had participated in 4 OUTWARD BOUND courses in 1970 were interviewed (15 of the 59 high school participants and 14 of the 19 Dartmouth participants) and completed questionnaires. Additional information was drawn from discussions with OUTWARD BOUND staff members and with some of the parents, teachers, and administrators of participating students. Students represented diverse economic, geographic and social backgrounds; however, students chose to enter the program for similar reasons: a dissatisfaction with their current education, a chance to achieve success in a tough physical program, and a concern that they come to know themselves in a new dimension. The OUTWARD BOUND course was found to be an intense personal and individual experience which frequently included: understanding physical and emotional fears and conquering them; discovery and examination of one's values, life styles and goals; appreciation of natural beauty; and enjoyment of other people and concern for their well-being. The overwhelming response to the course was enthusiastic and highly positive. Included in the report are detailed observations on various results and aspects of the course, such as stress, diversity of people, dependence and trust, college students as instructors, and sense of achievement. Appended is a facsimile questionnaire and results. (AN)

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Evaluation of the Effects of OUTWARD BOUND Training Upon Dartmouth College Students, and New Hampshire secondary school students

Winter - Spring 1970

A Summary

Courses run by:

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Hanover, New Hampshire

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U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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The OUTWARD BOUND Schools at Dartmouth College and Hurricane Island ran four courses for high school and college students during the winter and spring of 1970. This report will concern itself with the New Hampshire high school students and the Dartmouth College students who participated in these four courses.

The students who participated in the four OUTWARD BOUND courses are not easily characterized. They come from a variety of backgrounds: some rural, some suburban, some small town, a few large city. They go to large regional high schools and small ones; a few attend private schools. Some participants are from wealthy families, many more from moderate income homes and some from the lower income level. The participants vary in traditional academic ability; some are from the vocational tract, many from the general and college preparatory levels. Most of the participants share an appreciation and fondness for the outdoors but they are by no means equal in their skill in the wilderness. General physical condition and differing wilderness abilities provide diversity in the course.

Although the students at OUTWARD BOUND reflect different backgrounds, many come to the course for similar reasons. They are dissatisfied both with the education they are receiving and with their own personal values and life styles. They went to OUTWARD BOUND not only to get away from school but more often to discover something about themselves. One handsome, blond, athletic Dartmouth College student bothered by his personal life style said, "I wanted to get away from the dorm, the fraternity atmosphere, the parties every weekend." Another Dartmouth College student felt the need to broaden his education, beyond the college campus: "I wanted to get into an off-campus program." Another felt the same way, "Initially I went to get off campus for a term. I've been here two years and I don't think I have done very much". Some went because they felt they had fallen into a pattern: "I wanted to get out of the college rut. You don't get a lot of variety or a lot of challenge and you don't run across things that seem totally strange and beyond your experience. Books don't challenge you as much as you need; academic activity isn't challenging enough for most people,

myself included." A high school student said, "I'm not sure yet just why I went. It wasn't just to take the course itself and learn those things. It was something different; it was like an escape, I guess, from what I was doing. I was't really satisfied with what I was. OUTWARD BOUND was the only alternative I had. It gave you something to build your confidence."

Physical challenge is a strong motivating force for going to OUTWARD BOUND, and many related this as their chief reason for attending. High school and college athletics offer too few opportunities for all but the skilled to play. One high school student who had not made the varsity athletic teams said, "I wanted to see if I could do it or not; it (OUTWARD BOUND) sounded like a pretty good challenge." Thus, OUTWARD BOUND serves the important function of providing opportunities for the non-team student athlete or moderately capable athlete to find success in a physical sphere.

Some participants went to find physical challenge and found something else. This high school student represented the feelings of many when he said: "I went to find the point of my physical endurance. How far my body could take it. When I got up there, I found that it really wasn't a matter of physical stress as it was mental. It's more a mental stress than physical."

A few went because of personal problems. One slight very talkative high school senior related. "I felt I had to get away from the city and all of the hassles. Before I went on OUTWARD BOUND I was doing a lot of drugs and I couldn't kick it. I hoped to get straightened out." Some overweight students went hoping to get into physical shape.

Thus a variety of students from diverse economic and social backgrounds choose to enter an OUTWARD BOUND program for rather similar reasons: a dissatisfaction with their current education, a chance to achieve success in a tough physical program and a concern that they come to know themselves in a new dimension.

The main source of information from which the conclusions and recommendations are drawn for this report was the students. Both a questionnaire and a personal interview were used to gather information. The personal interview was usually two hours in length and taped so that it could be analyzed and evaluated at a later date. Questions were asked about the student's perceptions of the course, the effects of the course, the other participants and the general value of the course. Specific activities, such as solo and final expedition, were examined. I interviewed 15 of the 59 New Hampshire high school students and 14 of the 19 Dartmouth College students.

In addition to the personal interview, a detailed questionnaire was designed and sent to all participants; responses were received from 35 of them. The questionnaire was designed to obtain the perception of the participant as to the nature and value of the course and to reveal changes in individual attitude and personality that might have occurred as a result of the course. A copy of the questionnaire plus a catalogue of responses is appended to this report. (This summary contains only selected questions).

In addition to personal interviews and questionnaires, another method used for gathering data was discussions with members of the OUTWARD BOUND staff. These discussions were very helpful in giving me an understanding of the goals of the programs, and of what the staff felt to be the strengths and weaknesses of the courses. Previous proposals and reports which articulated the goals and purposes of the program were also used to provide background information on the nature of the OUTWARD BOUND courses.

In a few instances, I was able to talk with parents of participating students. They proved helpful in providing information on how they saw their children change or develop as a result of the course.

Some teachers and administrators of participating students were contacted and were able to make a comparison of the student before and after his experience in OUTWARD BOUND.

The evaluation is hampered in its depth for two reasons. One, the evaluation was not contracted until after three of the four courses had been completed, thus providing no opportunity to interview most of the students before they went on the course. Two, the summer proved to be an inconvenient time to conduct the survey. Teachers, parents, and students were frequently away on vacations. Several students found it difficult to find time for an interview because of summer jobs. Nevertheless, well-over half of the participants were interviewed or questioned via the personal interview or written questionnaire. A consistent and valid picture of these courses and their effects was obtained.

General Observations

The OUTWARD BOUND course is an intense personal and individual experience which frequently includes: understanding physical and emotional fears and conquering them; discovery and examination of one's values, life styles and goals; appreciation of natural beauty; and enjoyment of other people and concern for their well-being.

The OUTWARD BOUND experience can be and frequently is demanding and difficult, yet rewarding. Despite some criticisms, the overwhelming response to the course, derived from both written questionnaires and personal interviews, was enthusiastic and highly positive. I found the participants' degree of honesty and willingness to reveal relevant data about their feelings and reactions to the course a surprising and refreshing experience. In the following sections are the conclusions and observations about the results of the course as obtained from the variety of sources previously described.

Stress

In all four courses, the participants found that, while there was a considerable amount of physical stress, the real stress was caused by the problems eight to ten people have in living and working together in a harsh environment. This mental and emotional stress was extremely valuable in causing the participant to examine his own behavior and learn about himself. This self-examination is one of the most important aspects of the course. A college student stated, "The philosophy of OUTWARD BOUND isn't really survival, it's learning more about yourself, working with other people in a small group under hostile conditions under pressure." A high school student put it simply, "The stress is mental, you always have to think of the other guy. You need to depend on them."

Diversity of People

One very important and frequently mentioned value of three of the four OUTWARD BOUND courses was the mixture of people who were brought together in a patrol. Students met others from different backgrounds and with different life styles. In an age of conflict between age groups, races, and styles of dress and behavior, it is extremely important that we learn to acknowledge and respect our differences of styles and values, and work together. The OUTWARD BOUND course seems to foster respect and tolerance for others by bringing students of diverse persuasions together and making them work side by side for their mutual benefit.

In conclusion, one of the most significant results of the OUTWARD BOUND courses appears to be an appreciation and tolerance of others different from oneself. This appreciation and tolerance is encouraged by a variety of factors; three of the most significant are the diversity within the patrols, the obvious demands of a harsh environment and the duo.

Dependence and Trust

For many of the participants the sense of mutual dependence and trust was a high point of the experience. Placed in a survival situation they not only had to work together but also depend on each other for spiritual and emotional support. Activities such as navigation, belaying, map reading, and final expedition all contribute to give the student a deep feeling of responsibility and concern for his fellow participants, a concern which he frequently finds lacking in his normal daily life. School situations rarely develop this sense of concern for others. Students generally do their work alone and rarely feel any responsibility for whether the other guy is "getting it". Teamwork is relegated to the athletic field, while classroom learning remains an individual bettleground.

Similarly, schools rarely give students the responsibility that they encountered on OUTWARD BOUND. In OUTWARD BOUND they found the responsibilities enormous and invigorating. They found, too, that they could meet these responsibilities. One student said, "Navigation gave me an important feeling. The whole watch depended on me." Another described his feelings about navigation as follows: "Navigation made me feel pretty great. It was really important that I did it right. This trust was placed in me. They knew their lives could depend on it if we ran into some bad weather. I was glad they trusted me."

College Students As Instructors

In addition to their role as participants in the course for college students, the Dartmouth students serve as the instructors and assistant instructors for the high school courses. This proved to be an extremely valuable part of the OUTWARD BOUND program for college

students. The college students felt a large sense of responsibility because of the stress situation in which the high school students were placed. For many the role of leader and the feelings of concern and responsibility which they felt were the high points of their college career. Also, it was the first time for some that they had ever played this role. One student represents what many said:

> I really enjoyed working with girls in D-5. It was really exhausting. I had to play a strange role, I had to be teacher, instructor, model of what they should be, also had to be a buddy, father confessor when they had problems, build them up; I was a scapegoat from time to time. It was difficult. You had to keep in mind that you were running this for their own good. They had strange reactions to you -- sometimes hostile, sometimes almost worshipping and you had to be able to take it all in stride. There were a lot of things I had to cope with that I never had to before and I had a lot of responsibility and I felt a lot of responsibility. I was emotionally wrung-out, but it's very excellent.

The usual college experience can be a very inner directed one and most college students tend to focus on themselves, their own problems and situations. OUTWARD BOUND seems to break them out of what can often be a small, egotistical world and broadens their experience and increases their consciousness for others.

Sense of Achievement

Most participants both in the questionnaire and in the interview highlighted the sense of accomplishment they felt during and at the end of the course. They had endured physical hardships, conquered many fears and felt stronger for it. The drama of meeting and dealing with a challenge is exhilarating.

The sense of accomplishment in meeting a stiff challenge has several implications for the future behavior of the participant.

While this study cannot state whether these students will go on to achieve success in a normal school situation, it is apparent that many of them did feel a sense of achievement and personal worth that they had not found in school activities.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the OUTWARD BOUND course is an intense personal experience frequently involving changes in personality and values. It is impossible and unnecessary to list all of the individual changes; this report has described those which occurred most frequently. Because the OUTWARD BOUND experience is a total one and affects each individual in his or her own way, to single out one aspect of the course as being the key agent of change would be misleading. For most participants, it is some combination of the solo, initiative tests, physical and mental stress, and group relationships which enables them to look differently at themselves and the world. Finally, two comments from students about the difference OUTWARD BOUND has made to them may sum up the effect of the courses: "It changed everything. I can't say how but it did. I guess maybe I think about things differently. I try to stay away from some of the stupid things I used to do like just sitting around and playing cards for hours and hours in the dorm room. I spend a lot more time outside," and, "I have more enthusiasm right now for anything I'm doing. I'm doing more socially and politically than in any other term. I've taken more responsibility since the end of the course."

APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

Place a check in the space which most closely describes your feeling or attitude prior to the OUTWARD BOUND course.

e.g. If you felt somewhat dependent then you would indicate that as follows:

	dependent	____	____	____	____	____ self-sufficient
1)	dependent	1	12	6	12	4 self-sufficient
2)	steady	5	12	4	9	5 erratic
3)	generous	2	15	14	2	1 stingy
4)	rigid	2	6	5	15	6 flexible
5)	persistent	9	13	5	5	3 quitter
6)	thoughtless	1	7	6	17	5 considerate
7)	tardy	1	6	8	12	8 punctual
8)	sad	2	6	4	12	11 happy
9)	decisive	5	7	5	12	6 indecisive
10)	calious	5	2	9	11	8 sensitive

Place a check in the space which most closely describes you now.

1)	dependent	5	5	3	10	12	self-sufficient
2)	steady	11	13	5	5	1	erratic
3)	generous	9	18	8	0	0	stingy
4)	rigid	2	4	5	14	10	flexible
5)	persistent	19	13	1	2	0	quitter
6)	thoughtless	0	2	3	19	11	considerate
7)	tardy	1	5	7	10	12	punctual
8)	sad	2	2	3	16	12	happy
9)	decisive	7	17	6	4	1	indecisive
10)	callous	4	2	8	9	12	sensitive

3 of the most important characteristics I admired in people before the OUTWARD BOUND course were .... (circle 3).

a. generosity - 6
b. punctuality - 1
c. love - 11
d. spontaneity - 8
e. consideration of others - 19
f. humor - 14
g. empathy - 1
h. persistence - 6
i. flexibility - 6
j. happiness - 14
k. sensitivity - 7
l. decisiveness - 8
m. charity - 0
n. political involvement - 2
o. social concern - 1

3 of the most important characteristics I admire in people now are .... (circle 3).

a. generosity - 6
b. punctuality - 2
c. love - 13
d. spontaneity - 5
e. consideration of others - 21
f. humor - 10
g. empathy - 1
h. persistence - 10
i. flexibility - 6
j. happiness - 12
k. sensitivity - 9
l. decisiveness - 8
m. charity - 0
n. political involvement - 0
o. social concern - 0

3 of the most important priorities in my life before the OUTWARD BOUND course were .... (circle 3).

a. family life - 13
b. material gains - 8
c. academic rewards - 3
d. close friendships - 25
e. religious beliefs - 2
f. nature - 15
g. travel - 12
h. athletic competence - 13
i. social status - 4
j. intellectual pursuits - 8

3 of the most important priorities in my life now are .... (circle 3).

a. family life - 13
b. material gains - 2
c. academic rewards - 1
d. close friendships - 28
e. religious beliefs - 5
f. nature - 23
g. travel - 11
h. athletic competence - 11
i. social status - 1
j. intellectual pursuits - 8

My self-perception has not changed much during the last 4 months or so. (check)

True 7 3 3 9 13 False

Now I volunteer for activities more frequently than I did prior to the OUTWARD BOUND course.

True 15 10 2 3 4 False